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AN OLD WOMAN ON WIFE-CHOOSING.

THE carelessness with which some men choose their wives is wonderful to me ; they seem to bestow more trouble and pains upon the choice of a coat. One or two instances which have lately come to my notice will account for the charge I have brought against the lords of the creation ; but only some of them, for others, finding no one good enough, end by remaining old bachelors ; and it is best they should, for men of that sort would have worried angels, had they happened to marry them.

One friend of mine came to me some little time ago, and told me that he was going back to India in three months, and described with great feeling his lonely life there at some small up-country station, never seeing a European for weeks at a time. I remember taking off my spectacles, and wiping them, and leisurely putting them into the case, before I could quite make up my mind to say what I wanted. At last I said : 'Alfred, why don't you marry ?'

'My dear old soul, that is just what I am thinking of,' said he.

'Very well then, what's to hinder you ?' I replied.

'Well, you see, grouse-shooting begins next week ; of course I can't miss that ; and in three months I sail. But I tell you what I have been thinking you could do for me—would you mind giving a party, and asking a few eligibles ?'

'My dear Alfred, you shock me,' I replied ; 'I was never used to things of that sort in my youth.'

'Well, but I assure you it is often done now : there's Jones of the 10th, and Wiggins of the 19th, married just in that sort of way, and both have been as fortunate as if they had been months at it.'

So I gave my party, for my young friend was a great favourite. He would not let me introduce him to any one, but looked on, making himself generally agreeable, and asking other friends to introduce him, not me ; I think he was afraid I should look sly.

But towards the end of the evening, he came quietly up to me and said : 'Goody' [that is always my name with young people], 'who is that with the pink dress on, with her back towards us ?'

'That,' said I, 'is Miss Marian Browne, and a very nice girl too.'

'That's my wife ; I like her back,' said he.

And true enough, two months after he married her, and both sailed for India together. I often hear from them, and nothing can have turned out better than that hasty marriage.

Then there's young Balmayne ; I am sure I never thought he would have done so well as he has, after that imprudent, hurried marriage of his, and he heir to so much. But it's all right now, and I'll tell you how it came to pass.

You must know Balmayne hadn't much to do last winter in town, when he was up with his father, who was ill of the gout ; so he used to spend a good deal of his time looking out of the dining-room window ; and as his father has one of those houses in Piccadilly not far from Mr Beresford's, of course he saw a good many people go by in the course of the day.

One morning, it rained very hard—quite a pelt ; and as he was at his post, he saw a pretty girl run across the road from the Park, straight to the shelter of the porch, which was over the front-door of his father's house. She had no umbrella ; so, of course, Balmayne's first impulse was to lend her one. He put on his hat and coat, just as if he was going for a walk himself, and opened the door.

She really was very pretty, and very wet. She wouldn't come in to be dried, for she was in a hurry to be home ; so, as the offered umbrella was a heavy one, Balmayne carried it for her himself. She was a girl of good family, but very poor—that evil worse than sin, in the eyes of some people. However, to make a long story short, Balmayne married her before the season was over ; and more than that, had told his father that such was his intention. This brought on another fit of the gout ; and the old gentleman vowed and declared that he never would see her ; and so

matters were in this fix, till it was time to go down for the 12th ; and as the moors were in capital order, and a large party coming to the old gentleman's Highland box, Balmayne must come with him, and leave his beautiful young wife behind. This grieved him sadly ; but at last a bright idea occurred to him, which he carried out, as we shall relate ; for all these are true stories.

At the Euston Square railway station, when Balmayne arrived with his father, there was such a rush for seats, that they had some difficulty in finding one ; and as to a carriage to themselves, that was out of the question ; but they secured a compartment which, as we all know, contains only four. One lady was already in this ; but with the old gentleman's innate politeness, he would not hear of her moving, though, as his gouty foot was obliged to be placed on the opposite seat, there was only just room for them.

The lady sat by the old gentleman, and the son opposite to her. The lady was very pretty, and seemed so sorry and sympathising, whenever a twinge of the gout forced a strong expression from the old gentleman, that at last he began to take some notice of her, and to talk to her. Balmayne, absorbed in his newspaper, left them entirely to themselves ; and before they had reached York, they were quite good friends. It so happened that the young lady, too, was going to spend the night at York ; and as she was quite alone, the old gentleman told her she had better come to the same hotel as they did, and his servant should look after her things, for evidently Balmayne did not intend to take the smallest notice of her ; and seeing his son's want of proper politeness, perhaps made the good old gentleman all the more attentive.

Next morning, they again set out on their northern journey, and all together as before, for the lady seemed quite to belong to them now. Having ascertained that she was going down to a place within a few miles of his own shooting-box, the old man promised he would see her safe to the end of her journey, which was rather a long one, as she travelled slowly, being in delicate health ; and owing to his gout, the old gentleman did the same ; so, as it turned out, they remained together the whole way. When they got to the last station, before leaving the railway for country roads, the two gentlemen got out, the father desiring the lady to remain where she was in the waiting-room till he had found her a carriage, and had her luggage put on to it. She obeyed with a very sweet smile, but looked uncommonly nervous. Balmayne also looked nervous, which was odd. He followed his father, who was looking for a fly for his pretty protégée. 'Upon my word, as nice a girl as ever I met,' said the old gentleman. 'Really, I'm quite sorry to lose sight of her. How she would enliven us at the moors ; wouldn't she, Balmayne ?'

But Balmayne was as white as a sheet, and could hardly speak. At last, however, he did say : 'You needn't lose her unless you like, father.'

'Now, now, young gentleman, what do you mean ?' said his father, bristling up.

'I mean that she's my wife !' gasped out the unfortunate Balmayne.

'By Jove !' said the old gentleman, turning as purple as a turkey-cock ; 'who could have thought it ? You impudent young rascal !'

For some moments it seemed doubtful whether

anger at being taken in, or the real pleasure at his son's unknown wife being so much better than he had expected, would gain the mastery ; at last, however, his natural good-humour triumphed, and his son led him back to the little waiting-room, where was the poor young wife, more dead than alive with fright, not knowing how her husband's *ruse* would succeed.

Nothing could be better. The old gentleman embraced her with real paternal affection ; and one carriage took them all to his shooting-box ; and from that day to this, the good father has never ceased to bless the day when his son gave him such a daughter-in-law.

Before I've done, I'll just tell you one more, which didn't turn out so well.

Captain Williams—I forget of what regiment—was quartered at one of the small stations in the Bombay presidency, many miles from any large town. A few others were with him, and the chaplain of the regiment. Any one who has been quartered anywhere abroad under these circumstances will know how well acquainted people get with each other.

After a time, Captain Williams and the young chaplain used to read over their home-letters together, and talk over absent friends, for the arrival of the mail was the great event of the time. Captain Williams had two sisters, who both lived with their widowed mother at home. There had been a much larger family, but all had died except the eldest and youngest daughter, the brother being somewhere about half-way between. There was nearly twenty years between the sisters ; indeed, Captain Williams hardly looked upon the eldest as a sister, being born of a former marriage, and more like an aunt than anything else.

This chaplain was rather a namby-pamby sort of fellow, always complaining of his lonely life and all that sort of thing ; and Captain Williams was often his confidant.

Whenever the mail came in, he would always stroll to the captain's bungalow, and at last was allowed to read some of his sister's letters, for he kept up a very close correspondence with that dear little own sister of his ; and as he talked with great delight of her, and read passages of her letters to the low-spirited young chaplain, it is no wonder if at last this young man began to wish she would write to him.

He had seen her picture ; her brother had had it painted just before he left England ; and it was quite pretty enough to make a romantic young man with nothing to do fancy himself in love with it ; so, after a little, he went to the captain, and proposed seriously for his sister, only the lady must put her pride in her pocket, and consent to come out to him, as he could not possibly get leave ; besides, the expenses of the journey to England and back would be more than his slender finances could stand.

So Captain Williams wrote the letter ; and in due time the answer came that his sister would come, and consented to be the wife of his friend the chaplain. The letter was written by the elder sister, but neither of them thought anything of that, as very likely the bride-elect was shy, and had deputed her to write. The next mail was the time mentioned, as after that the regiment might soon be expected to move up the country further

from Bombay, and leave would then be still more difficult, and the journey longer and more expensive. So about the time expected, our two friends, so soon to be brothers, got a fortnight's leave, and came down to Bombay.

You may imagine how anxiously they watched on the pier the gradual nearing of the steamer, and how nervously they watched all the passengers as they appeared. A sigh of disappointment was rising to the heart of the young chaplain—he could not see the original of the picture—when he was startled by a horror-struck exclamation of his friend: 'By Heavens, Arabella!' And at the same moment an elderly female rushed at the poor captain, and folded him in a sisterly embrace. 'Where is Alice?' exclaimed Captain Williams in desperation.

'At home with mamma, dear brother,' said the bride-expectant, glancing at his companion. The chaplain looked at her, and then at his friend. Some say his hair turned white then and there; at anyrate, it did some months after.

Well, you know I said he was a namby-pamby sort of a fellow, so, instead of saying: 'This is not the article I sent for,' and shipping off the lady by the next steamer, he quietly accepted his destiny. But either it was too much for him, or the climate did not agree with him; somehow or other, in a year or two he died, leaving a strong hearty widow, who returned next mail to England, and is now, as far as I know, the oracle of some of the small Cheltenham tea-parties, and tells of the romantic attachment of her dear husband, and of all the wonders she has seen in India.

This also, I am sorry to say, is a true story, and often have I been very sorry for the poor, low-spirited chaplain. I only wish his little experience may teach young men to look well before they leap. India and the colonies are full of such histories. If, when quartered at those out-of-the-way stations, instead of flirting with those they would not speak to at home, sons and brothers would only remember, before marrying, the misery they bring upon their fond, proud mothers and sisters, I do think such catastrophes would less frequently occur.

Thank goodness, I have neither son nor brother to be anxious about. I heard of one young man the other day who as near as possible engaged himself to a handsome Hottentot. What in the world would the countess, his mother, and his sisters the Ladies Anne and Louisa, have said to such a sister-in-law! And yet they would have had her, if the marriage had not been prevented by the presence of mind of a friend of mine, a young brother-officer of his own.

It is really a serious question, now that our young men are sent all over the world when hardly out of school-room discipline, whether they ought not to marry before they go. This, anxious mothers and sisters generally try to prevent, and with some show of reason, for at that age a man can scarcely know his own mind. Then, again, if he waits till he comes home 'for good,' he is what is commonly called an old fogie, whom no pretty girl would really care for. Both are evils, but the worst evil of all is picking up no one knows whom, in those far-off lands, and then finding, when you come home, and take your place amongst your family and friends, that though your wife might do very well in the bush, or at small country stations,

she is neither an ornament to your father's halls nor your mother's drawing-room. So, young men, beware! The old woman has had her say.

THE UPSTAIRS OMNIBUS.

MATTERS are gradually coming to such a position with us now in London, and some other of our great and closely-packed towns, that the problem, 'how to get up stairs,' will have to be seriously considered. Society puts the question, and mechanical science will have to solve it. We increase about a thousand per week in the metropolis, taking one week with another; and this additional thousand must be housed somehow or other. Even if railway companies did not (which they do) pull down whole streets of houses to make new 'junctions' and 'extensions,' and so forth; even if joint-stock companies did not (which they do) absorb many houses, and turn out many housekeepers and lodgers, to make new banks, insurance-offices, monster warehouses, and the like—even then we should want a constant accession of new dwellings to receive the additional population, made up as it is of the excess of births over deaths, and the excess of immigrants from the country over emigrants to the country. It is true, as we find to our cost when trying to seek out a field-walk where we knew fields existed not long ago, that speculative builders are covering the suburbs with new houses, adapted to various tastes and various pockets. But this does not fully meet our needs.

Hence has arisen the conviction in many quarters, that London must try to grow *upwards* as well as *outwards*, in altitude as well as in latitude and longitude, towards the sky as well as towards the poles and the equator—in other words, that we must build loftier houses and warehouses, to enable an acre of land to bear the burden of more of us than at present. There is no particular reason, in the nature of things, why the houses in the metropolis should have their present average height; the average of those of Paris is certainly higher; and we may suppose the Parisians could tell us a reason why. In countries where earthquakes are frequent, houses of small height are built, because they could stand a shock with less chance of overturning. In oriental countries, houses are generally low, partly because land is of small value, and partly because Mustapha and Meer Singh are too lazy to use long flights of stairs. In Edinburgh, some of the old houses are of immense height, partly because, being built on the side of a hilly slope, the backs are carried down to a greater depth than the fronts, or *vice versa*. So in other cases, there may perhaps be assignable reasons why matters are as they are. But, in London, what test have we to judge from? Why has Baker Street or Harley Street four ranges of rooms above the level of the pavement, instead of three or five? Why have the houses, tens of thousands in number, which rear three stories above the pavement, why have they not two or four? The answer is 'custom.' That which our forefathers did is easier for us to do than a substitute requiring to be worked out by ourselves. This much, however, may easily be understood, that if houses were made higher than they now are, more bodily fatigue would be experienced in ascending to the upper stories; and so long as

our mode of making the ascent remains as it is, this would be an unavoidable result.

Some of the new joint-stock hotels are adopting plans which throw not a little light upon this matter. At Paddington, at Euston Square, and at King's Cross, large hotels were built in connection with the great railway termini. These were joint-stock only so far as the railway companies were connected with them; but when it became bruited about that 'dividends of fifteen or twenty per cent.' were derived from them, an hotel-madness seized upon our company projectors. Everybody thought that everybody else would like to live in an elegant hotel, and that everybody's taste would lead to the realisation of a dividend of at least twenty per cent. on the capital expended. There sprung up by degrees the Terminus Hotel adjacent to the London Bridge Station, the Grosvenor Hotel forming part of the Victoria Station, the Westminster Palace Hotel near the Abbey; and now there are being built the Langham Hotel near Portland Place, the Inns of Courts Hotel near Lincoln's Inn, the Strand Hotel on the site of Lyon's Inn, the Charing Cross Hotel in connection with the grand new terminus of the South-eastern Railway, and some others; while some of the older hotels are being rebuilt in grandiose style. As to the fifteen or twenty per cent., we will say nothing of that; the shareholders will doubtless ascertain the truth in due time. The point to be borne in mind in reference to our present subject is, that in many of these hotels, on account of the great height, *mechanical lifts* are provided, to save in part the fatigue incident to ascending long flights of stairs. Builders as well as engineers are looking with watchful attention at the amount of success attending these arrangements; because there is a peculiar application of hydraulic power now adopted in these lifts, more effective than manual power, and simpler and cheaper than steam-power.

We have not now to learn for the first time that persons are raised to the upper floors of lofty buildings by machinery, to save time and to save legs. Very nearly thirty years ago, the late Dr Ure described an apparatus used for this purpose at Orrell's splendid new cotton-mill near Stockport—a wonder in those days, though excelled since. The arrangement adopted depends upon the construction of a square well or shaft, running from the bottom to the top of the building, and intersecting all the floors as it passes. Two or more persons, standing on a platform at the bottom of this well, pull a rope which places the platform in connection with certain pulleys and fly-wheels; when—presto! they find themselves lifted up rapidly and smoothly, by some invisible agency. When they desire to stop on the level of any one of the floors or stories, they have only to let go the rope, the platform stops, and they walk out of the shaft into the room. When they want to descend, they pull another rope, which enables the machinery to give a reverse movement to the platform. In buildings where there is a vast supply of steam-power, this ascending and descending movement can be managed very easily. In the palmy time of the Colosseum in the Regent's Park, before the days of Nigger Melodists and Shadow Pantomimes, the ascending-room for visitors to the great panorama of London was one of the marvels of the place. Pleasure-seekers of the present generation

may need to be told, that when the upper part of St Paul's Cathedral was being repaired some thirty years or so ago, an ingenious and daring artist conceived the idea of sketching views of London on all sides, from the highest attainable point on the exterior of the cathedral, and then painting a panorama from these sketches. The idea was a bold one, and boldly he carried it out. He caused a little cabin to be constructed on the very summit of the cross, and there he worked day after day: the romantic character of his enterprise attracting a large share of public attention to his doings. As the panorama was to cover no less than forty thousand square feet of surface, it was necessary to build a structure to contain and exhibit it; and hence the Colosseum in the Regent's Park. As the view of London from St Paul's is more or less extensive according as the spectator is stationed in the gallery below the dome, in the upper gallery, or near the summit; so did the artist contrive to give three variations to the effect of the gigantic picture, by causing a central tower to be built up in the exhibition-room, with galleries at three different heights. Now, here it was that the ascending-room was provided, as a novelty in itself, and as a means of making the ascent without fatigue; and a steam-engine, available for other purposes in the exhibition, furnished the motive-power.

But it seems as if we are on the eve of something different in regard to the working of these up-and-down rooms or platforms. We now talk of *hydraulic lifts*; and we promise to convert the rooms into such nicely fitted and seated, and cushioned and carpeted saloons, as to resemble first-class railway carriages, or, at anyrate, the better kind of omnibus. Hence the designation *upstairs omnibus*. Concerning hydraulic action, it is singular that this, after being placed under a cloud by steam-power, has risen into note again within the last few years. Practical men have found, what scientific men had long ago deduced, that the pressure of water exerts a power which has many special and peculiar advantages in some of its applications. A column of water any number of feet high exerts a certain definite pressure on a broader-spreading body of water beneath it; a body of water, compressed by any powerful force within a closed vessel which it quite fills, exerts an almost irresistible power in the attempt (the determination, as we may almost call it) to expand to its former bulk; and on one or other of these two principles depends the action of a large number of ingenious machines now in use. The wonderful Bramah or hydraulic presses, by which *Great Easterns* are forcibly driven into the water, and Menai tubular bridges raised into the air, depend simply on this irrepressible tendency of water to return to its former bulk after ever so little condensation. The hydraulic cranes, invented by Sir W. Armstrong, of big-gun celebrity, and now coming largely into use in harbours, docks, quays, piers, and river-side warehouses, depend in like manner on the elastic force of water when under any degree of compression; but here the action is more marked by readiness of application than intensity of power. So it is (or will be) in the hydraulic lifts for ascending rooms in hotels and other buildings; we do not want to raise weights measured by tens or hundreds of tons at a time; what we rather need is something quick, handy, and always available. Manchester and

other busy towns in the north already use water-power to perform work which a few years ago was generally performed by steam. Mr Schiele has, for this purpose, introduced many clever adaptations of the *turbine*, an hydraulic machine invented by Fourneyron about forty years ago—or rather, improved by Fourneyron from a previous invention. In the turbine, there is a horizontal drum or hollow wheel attached to a vertical hollow revolving axis; and water is supplied and discharged either parallel to the axis, radiating from the axis, or converging radially towards the axis, according to the kind of arrangement adopted. In any case, motion is produced; and the advantage of the turbine is, that it occupies a very small space compared with the power generated. The corporation of Manchester supplies high-pressure water to the buildings of that town; and this pressure, feeding numerous turbines, now supplies wind to church-organs, turns engines and fans, works hoists and cranes, and is proposed (if not actually adopted) for working sewing-machines, mangles, and washing-machines—all by merely turning a tap!

Mr Whichcord, an architect who combines a good amount of engineering skill with architectural taste, is putting to the test two theories sketched in the foregoing paragraphs—namely, that a given area of ground may be more profitably employed than it now usually is, by building houses with a greater number of stories, floors, or flats; and that by a little extra expense when a house is first built, a mechanism may be provided which will permanently lessen the loss of time and the fatigue of muscle incident to the ascending of lofty dwellings. There is now building, and nearly finished, at Brighton, the loftiest hotel in England. Visitors to 'London-Super-Mare,' during the last season, may have seen the hotel, situated on the south esplanade opposite the sea, some little distance west of the Steyne. It is not easy, without getting a crick in the neck, to look upwards to the topmost ornament of this extraordinary building. There are either nine or ten (we forgot which) ranges or stories of rooms above the level of the roadway, besides others in the basement which escape the public eye; and six out of the nine or ten have sufficient importance, as visitors' apartments, to be provided with elegant balconies and verandahs in front of the range of windows opposite the sea. Of the beauty, merit, convenience, and probable financial result, of this Brighton hotel, we say nothing. It comes for notice here simply because a given number of square yards of ground have been made to bear an enormous number of rooms; and because the architect intends that, instead of there being more 'getting up stairs' than in houses of smaller height, there shall actually be less. There are, it appears, no fewer than five distinct hydraulic lifts being made in this hotel, each intended to facilitate a particular kind of lifting or raising, but all alike dependent on the pressure of a lofty column of water. It would not be desirable here to go into the technical details of this matter; but the reader may perhaps be able to realise to his mind the formation of a tank or cistern at the top of the house, the maintenance of this tank constantly filled by high pressure from the Brighton Water-works, the descent of water from the tank through a pipe to the level of the ground, and the further

descent of the water through a well dug to an equal depth below the ground. The pressure on the water in the well is then measured by the whole height of the column, including the well and the pipe; and this pressure, by a kind of syphon-like action, is brought to bear *upwards* upon a platform or stage. The exact mechanism for this transfer may be varied; but the thing to be remembered is, that the downward pressure of water is transferred to, or converted into, the upward movement of a platform. What may be placed upon this platform, depends on the purpose to which it is to be applied. At the new Brighton hotel, we are told, the principal of the five hydraulic lifts works up and down in a vertical shaft eight feet square. It is neatly furnished, and constitutes a small saloon or 'upstairs omnibus.' The shaft is enclosed on all sides, except an aperture or doorway on a level with each story. The height of the shaft is, from the ground-floor to the fifth story, fifty-six feet. The little movable saloon within it will accommodate seven or eight persons at once, who can be raised to the uppermost of the five stories in one minute, or to any of the intermediate stories in a few seconds' less time. The pulling of a handle—very little more trouble than pulling a bell—suffices to set in action the hydraulic power which raises the platform; while the adjustment of nicely-balanced weights renders the movement smooth and easy. This is, *par excellence*, the visitors' lift, not to be used by mortals of less exalted dignity. A second lift ascends from the basement to the fifth story, intersecting and communicating with all the intermediate stories in its way; the ascent is seventy-six feet; and the purpose, we believe, is to facilitate the ascent of servants with their burdens. A third lift, about as lofty as the second, is for sending up dinners, &c., only, and not hundredweights of humanity. A fourth carries up dinners from the basement to the grand coffee-room only. A fifth carries up wines and other liquors from the cellar to the bar. Now, if the reader will only picture to himself the amount of running up and down stairs inevitably involved in the daily proceedings at any one of our large hotels, he will easily perceive that these hydraulic lifts will not only save much bodily fatigue, but will also economise time. It may, perchance, turn out that lofty hotels will really be more handy than those of less height. Already, some of our photographers have begun the adoption of lifts, worked by a winch-handle, to raise their sitters to the studio at the top of the house. Lately there was an action to try whether a lift, which 'squeaked' and 'groaned' a little while moving, was worth the money charged for it by the maker to the photographer; but this is a matter of detail; machinists will cause the lifts to work smoothly enough, as soon as architects shall have planned for their introduction.

All this, however, apparently different, belongs to the same class of operations as those which facilitate the ascent and descent of miners. Some of our Cornish and Durham mines have a depth of little less than two thousand feet; it is frightful to contemplate the fatigue which the poor men used to endure when ladders were the only means of access; but now the steam-engine lowers them down and draws them up very rapidly. As a consequence, all things considered, mines can be worked more cheaply than heretofore.

Let us then comfortably entertain this belief, that, whether we obtain a smartly-furnished 'upstairs omnibus' or not, whenever our houses are built more lofty, to contain more people, there are means at hand to lessen the evil of lofty stairs.

LORD LYNN'S WIFE

CHAPTER V.—MISS CRAWSE SEES A FACE SHE KNOWS.

'YES, Aunt Martha; the letter was from Liverpool, from mamma. Would you like to see it?' And Miss Crawse let the linen that she was marking drop upon her knee, laid aside the pen and the indelible ink, and produced a letter from her pocket. But Mrs Killick—for this conversation took place in the little dining-room of the surgeon's house at Patcham Cross Roads—Mrs Killick had weak eyes, and she shook her head despondently as she glanced at the closely-written sheets of thin bluish note-paper.

'No use at all, my dear,' said she, going on with her monotonous task of darning socks; 'no use for me to blind myself over poor dear Susan's small crisscrossed handwriting. If she wrote clear and black like you— But you can tell me just as well what she says. Does my sister scold me for not writing? And did she get the preserves all right? And how is poor Sarah?'

Miss Crawse very good-humouredly cast her eyes over the fine upstrokes and long-tailed flourishes, therefrom to cull the pith of the letter, for her aunt's behoof. She was quite a different person in that house at Patcham from the fierce little creature—half pert, half obsequious—that we have seen confronting the serene majesty of her dear friend Aurelia. Under the Killicks' roof, their niece was helpful, frank-spoken, and not by any means a disagreeable inmate. She had no reason to be either defiant or cringing with those plain honest relatives of her own, and it was not her nature to eat the bread of idleness; so she volunteered a good many small services for both aunt and uncle; and as she sat marking the linen, a child's frock, that she had just finished hemming, lay beside her, and a little way off lay a well-thumbed Latin Grammar, out of which she had been teaching his accidence to little Edward Killick. The master of the house agreed with his wife that Lydia Crawse was a comfortable sort of visitor, brisk, cheerful, and not the less estimable because of her naturally hot temper.

'Sarah is much as usual,' said Miss Crawse, skimming the cream from the wordy epistle under her eyes—'not in much pain, but very low-spirited. She has been trying some quack medicine, and fancied, at first, that it would cure her spine, poor thing; but she got rather worse than better, and mother insisted on her leaving off the remedy, whatever it was. I can't read the Greek name. The regular doctor has been called in again, and he orders her jellies and strong soup, and all sorts of nice things, as she has no appetite, poor dear;

and no wonder, shut up always in that smoky, dull Bail Street! And here Miss Crawse's brow gathered into a frown, and her foot drummed on the floor with the old petulant action, for she was thinking of Aurelia and her promises, as yet, of course, unperformed.

'What does your mother say about herself—about money-matters, I mean?' asked Mrs Killick, coughing apologetically behind the stocking. 'Those boys, your brothers, must be a great anxiety to Susan.'

'Yes, they are,' returned Miss Crawse, rustling the paper roughly between her short fingers. 'She says she has just had a letter from Tom. He's at Malta, poor boy; but they expect to come home to Plymouth or Spithead soon, and then the ship will be paid off, and Tom will be out of the service, perhaps. His best chance, he says, is to get employed in one of the dockyards; but that chance is a poor one, because so many of the youngsters have more influence than he has—parliamentary influence, he means. Willie tells the same story. He expects to be told to wait—wait, while others pass before him. What with the rent, and the taxes, and the doctor, mamma could hardly scrape together enough for Willie's tutor. And suppose he's thrown on her hands!'

Miss Crawse's swarthy cheek was all in a glow by this time, and there was an ominous light in her Mongolian-looking eyes, for she was getting more and more doubtful of her own prudence in trusting to Aurelia's fair words. She sincerely pitied the griefs, and cordially shared the hopes and cares of her own kith and kin; and some connection, perhaps illogical, between Miss Darcy's serene prosperity and the narrow fortunes and pinched existence of those at home, rose up before her, and stung her temper to ebullition; so that when Mrs Killick, in all sincerity of common-place condolence, expressed her regret for her elder and poorer sister's condition, mentioning, for the twentieth time, how gladly she and her husband would extend a helping-hand, were it within their power to do more than send the usual small dole at Christmas, and suggesting, as a new idea, that Miss Darcy, if solicited, might be able to procure some appointment for Lydia's brothers, that petulant young person could bear no more.

'Help me! Miss Darcy! Yes, she could, if she chose. Her admirer, Lord Lynn, if he really does care about her, could set Tom on his feet in a moment. There's a Wyvill in the Admiralty, I know; and if it's all stuff about his paying his addresses to Aurelia, which I half suspect, still one of the county members visits at Mr Darcy's; and much it would cost her, certainly, to put in a word for Willie or Tom. Nobody gets help but those who help themselves. We shall see by and by.' And Miss Crawse flounced out of the room, and came back in an incredibly short space of time arrayed in her bonnet and shawl. She was going to the village shop and post-office, she said, and then for a walk, to clear her brains. She could

think best when walking, as she always declared ; and she was a great walker, and fond of exercise, and commonly executed most of the errands of the Patcham household. On this occasion, Mrs Killick wanted nothing but a couple of skeins of darning-cotton and a paper of pins—commissions which her niece undertook with perfect readiness. Equally compliant was Miss Crawse when, as she passed the open door of the surgery, Mr Killick called out to beg, that if she were going as far as the end of the village street, she would deliver a bottle of lotion to old Mrs Flinn at the almshouses. 'That is, if you're not too proud to be seen carrying physic to my patients, or if the old lady's tongue does not frighten you,' said the kindly surgeon. 'She gave me a benefit of it this morning ; but her rheumatism is real, and that blockhead of a boy will want his dinner before he goes out again with the basket. So, if you don't mind' —

Lydia Crawse did not mind in the least. She took the bottle, hid it under her shawl, and started. A trifling circumstance, but then the great events of life pivot on trifles. Had Mr Killick's boy, the usual Ganymede of medicines, been immediately available, the subsequent events of this history would, in all probability, never have occurred at all. Miss Crawse took the bottle, and trudged sturdily up the long straggling street, with its garden palings, and cottages, and smithy, and beer-houses shewing their rival signs afar off.

To walk, at no demure ladylike pace, but at a brisk rate was a relief to Lydia Crawse ; her thoughts came more freely, and the exercise gave her muscles something to occupy them, and took away that irritable desire to smash crockery or main furniture, which she, like many hot-tempered persons, felt when brooding over her cares in repose. Those cares were not wholly, or for the most part, of a selfish character. Miss Crawse, like a wasp, was faithful to her own race, however she might be disposed to buzz and sting when abroad. She thought much more about her mother's troubles, the butcher's bill only paid in part, the grocer's bill outgrowing the meagre sums handed in on account, the arrears of rent in Bail Street, than of her own prospects. She was full of sympathy for her brothers, who confided all their youthful difficulties to her. She knew of Tom's debts on board and ashore, small liabilities, but not to be cleared off out of his petty salary save by wondrous self-denial. She had scraped together a very few pounds, that Willie might be dressed 'like a gentleman' before the examiners ; and to this end she had sold at the county town sundry trinkets, old keepsakes that it cost her a pang to part with. No, Miss Crawse was not selfish, in the narrowest sense of the word. She meant her family to have the first share of those good things which she was resolved that Aurelia Darcy, by fair means or foul, should provide.

'For myself,' thus ran the ex-companion's half-spoken soliloquy—'for myself, I'd scorn to ask her for anything. I'd rather work my fingers to the bone than touch her money, and I'd take my chance of a situation sooner than demean myself to beg for her good word. Hers, forsooth ! But I must put my pride in my pocket, for mother's sake, and Sarah's sake, and the boys. Them she shall assist, and soon too, or I'll know the reason why. I don't know what has happened to change her, but there is a change. She seems to freeze

me into silence, somehow, though I could bite my tongue off for being so cowardly as not to speak what I have in my heart.' And Miss Crawse walked on, her memory busy in painting pictures of the past.

On her mental retina rose the images of two girls, one short and dark, the other fair and majestic, walking side by side in a glen among the wild scenery of Ulster, with the purple and black masses of the mountains rolling vast and savage to left and right. There was confidence then in the place of watchful reticence ; there was no barrier of etiquette between the great heiress and the poor dependent. In that out-of-the-way nook, buried among the mountains, distinctions of rank and wealth were less forcibly marked than in the life of cities, and the advantages of age and experience were on the side of the more humbly born of that pair of friends ; and yet, even then, Lydia Crawse had always been half afraid of her junior, had always felt that the cold gray eyes, and the calm young face, and the unruffled composure, were signs of a nature as much harder and more polished than her own, as the diamond is harder and brighter than granite. And now, after nearly three years of separation, she found herself less and less a match for her quondam friend, and dimly recognised the force and tenacity of purpose that lay behind so fair an exterior. To be sure, Miss Crawse had a talisman in her possession, by the aid of which, in case of need, she could exorcise even a stronger spirit than that of Aurelia ; but the spell would work mischief to all concerned, without benefiting the enchanter, and it was not dark Lydia's nature to do harm gratis.

Pondering on these matters, she pushed on along the dusty street, till she reached the almshouses, and remembering her errand, knocked at the door of No. 3, and was soon in the presence of Mrs Flinn, the most inveterate gossip in the parish. Lydia knew Mrs Flinn well enough, the good woman being a constant patient, albeit a non-paying one, of Mr Killick's, and she had more than once listened with a dry sense of humour to the almswoman's flow of words. Mrs Flinn had nothing to think of but her own aching joints and the demerits of her neighbours, and little scandal could exist in that countryside without finding its way to her greedy ears. On this occasion, however, Mrs Flinn was suffering very sharp twinges from her old complaint, and her talk was on less general topics than usual.

'Much obliged to you, I'm sure, miss ; and very kind it is of you to come out in the heat of the day for a poor old woman like myself, but I'm afraid doctor's stuff won't do me much good. I'm most sure of that, and so I told Dr Killick to his face, this blessed morning. If only old Nanny could be swum now, I might get some ease for my poor aching bones, which they feel as if somebody was sawing 'em in two, with a blunt saw too, to get at the marrow. But the doctor said it would be agin the law, and if so, more shame to the law, says I.'

'Old Nanny swum ? What good would that do to anybody ? I don't know what you mean,' said Miss Crawse, wearily, for her thoughts were astray, and the woman's babble annoyed her instead of diverting her.

'Old Nanny Brown. She that lives at the turnpike on the Blanchminster Road, a lone place, three mile off and more. Her goodman was very

respectable—I don't deny that—so, when he died, they let her go on keeping the bar. But she's a bad one, is Nanny. She never liked me, nor I her, when my master had the Whitehouse Farm under Squire West, before misfortunes came and left me a lone creature in this place, eating charity-bread. We were neighbours then; and she told me what a lucky woman I was to have seven such good cows in milk, just when the cattle were dying all about us. You may believe me or not, miss, but the very next week after that spiteful cat was in my yard, the cows took ill, poor Brindle first, and six died out of the seven; and that October my master fell off a ladder thatching, for he did a bit of thatch-work at odd times, and never did much work more, but was on club-pay till he died. Last Sunday, who should look in here but old Nanny, and she asked after my rheumatics in her sneering way, and I've been racked to pieces nigh ever since; she deserves to be swum, if ever any one did deserve it.'

It really appeared, on further inquiry, that Mrs Flinn sincerely believed in the malign influence of this reputed witch over her ailments, and was as eagerly desirous to subject the sorceress to the ordeal of water as ever was medieval peasant. Lydia Crawse chuckled inwardly. She had strong common sense, and the idea of a witch keeping a turnpike-gate tickled her fancy. She had never been superstitious; and this revelation of the darker shadows on the rustic mind—for Mrs Flinn declared, with an accent of conviction, that she was not the only one in the parish, by many, to attribute occult powers to the supposed tormentor—amused her.

'I never went up the Blanchminster Road except in a close carriage,' said she, getting up from the Windsor chair on which she had been sitting; 'so I'll take my walk there, and have a peep at this wicked enchantress.'

There was real concern in Mrs Flinn's voice, as she protested against any such rash tampering with the ministers of Darkness. It was bad enough, she declared, to meet old Nanny's evil eye by chance; but to seek out one whose power of 'wishing' harm to the human race was so unscrupulously exerted, was folly indeed: Nanny Brown was a foreigner, no Warwickshire-born person, but a native of some distant part of England: her sons had turned out ill, and one of them had been transported, while the other had but just come out of prison, having narrowly escaped a severer sentence for his share in the death of a gamekeeper. If half what Mrs Flinn said were true, in short, Nicholas Brown, sheepstealer, poacher, rick-burner, and suspected coiner, was by no means the sort of Corydon that nervous persons might desire to meet in a solitary spot. But Miss Crawse laughed, as she said that she was not worth robbing, and that foot-pads, like ghosts, feared the daylight; and she kept to her purpose of walking up the Blanchminster Road.

The way from the manufacturing town of St Sarcenets to the cathedral city of Blanchminster is rather a lonely one; and its loneliness reaches its climax about two miles beyond the guide-post of Patcham, where the rush-grown lea-land comes close down to the sharp flints of the macadamised highway, and where oozy streams creep lazy and dark through the peaty soil. Warwickshire is a county remarkable for its hedgerow timber, but

here the gaunt elms, the many-limbed willows, and moss-grown ashes, seem to have grown into unusually rank and straggling vegetation, and the yellow and russet leaves hang dank over the road. There is scarcely a house to be seen. Miss Crawse was impressed, reluctant as she was, by the dreary solitude.

The day was one of those hot moist autumn days, when all nature seems to be steeped in a vapour-bath, and when the lazy mist-wreaths hang all day above the ill-drained meadows, and round the skirts of the wood, for lack of a fresh breeze to dissipate them. Good walker as Miss Crawse was, she found the oppressive atmosphere and clinging dust lengthen out the miles as she went on, and when she passed the third milestone, and saw the white turnpike-gate on the rise of a little hill, she felt as if she had taken an unnecessary amount of trouble for a trivial object.

Old Nanny's cottage turned out to be a two-storied edifice, built of the freestone found so plentifully in the county, and already honey-combed by rain and frost. The roof was a sloping one, with wooden gables and mossy tiles. The window of the little front room—half-shop, half-parlour—displayed a couple of pickle-jars, one full of conglomerated brandy-balls, one of a red and white saccharine substance called Albert rock, some tapes, needles, balls of string, and highly-coloured portraits of the Red Rover and Marshal Blucher. Over the upper windows grew a neglected woodbine, filling the air with sweet, sickly perfume; and among the tendrils dangled a card proclaiming 'Lodgings.'

But it was not on the card that Miss Crawse's eyes, as she came softly up under shadow of the straggling quickset hedge, were fixed; they were riveted on a face—a sallow, wan face, with black hair hanging neglected about the temples, and fierce cavernous eyes glaring forth upon vacancy—that Miss Crawse saw through the open casement of one of the little upper rooms of Nanny Brown's cottage. Miss Crawse had a bold heart, but it was fairly cowed now. She bent her head and drew down her veil by an instinctive movement. Sick and giddy, she opened the little half-door of the petty shop, tottered forward, and dropped into a chair. There was no old woman, witch or not, on the premises at that moment; it was a buxom, black-eyed lass of fourteen, Nanny's granddaughter, only living child of Nanny's eldest born, serving out his term at Bermuda, who came hurrying forward to courtesy, and express her fears that the lady was ill.

'It's nothing,' said Miss Crawse with a gasp—'nothing. Only the heat; and I have walked too far. I should like a glass of water. Would you be so good as to get me a glass of water?'

CHAPTER VI.—A LETTER FROM IRELAND.

The post came late to Beechborough, as to many country-houses. On the morning of that day on which Miss Crawse had walked out to the turnpike, it was later than usual; either the train was behind time, or the foot-messenger had dawdled among the ale-houses and farms between the town of Stainsbury and Mr Darcy's house. Mr Darcy, as he sat in the Oak Room, grumbled testily at the tardiness of the walking-postman. His daughter was with him. Aurelia made it a

rule not to neglect her father. In character and tastes they were very wide apart ; but she knew that he was fond of her, and she knew, too, that her judgment was secretly valued by him above the gold of Ophir. Mr Darcy was not a complimentary parent—he would have died sooner than have told his child in so many words how highly he rated her abilities and force of will ; but when he could get from Aurelia an unsolicited opinion about Timmins the land-steward, or Delves the head-gardener, or those unsatisfactory legal advisers, Burjoyce and Gay, he felt as if a load of responsibility were lifted off him.

And Aurelia had been very kind. Whether the prospect of shortly leaving her father made her more gentle and thoughtful than usual towards the old man, who might soon feel lonelier than ever, when his daughter was married and gone from under his roof-tree, it is hard to say ; but she had been very patient, ready, and serviceable, divining what the vain weak man was ashamed to confess, and unravelling the tangled skein of more than one affair that lawyer, steward, and employer had combined to complicate into a Gordian-knot. Mr Darcy was pleased and proud of his daughter ; but he would have been ashamed of owning either sentiment. 'Yes, yes, my love ; women cannot quite understand these matters. I must talk it over with Timmins. Yes ; and I'll write to Burjoyce by this day's post, and I mean to tell him that I choose to have the opinion of some eminent conveyancer on that point about the great tithes,' said the master of Beechborough. 'What can Jenkins be doing that he is so late with the letter-bag ?'

In it came at last. There were plenty of newspapers and no lack of business-letters for the Squire, two smaller ones for Aurelia—one of these bore the Irish postmark, and was directed in a queer shaking hand, with a blob of wax for a seal. This letter Aurelia made haste to conceal, opening the other with ostentatious eagerness, and insisting on reading out to her father what that 'dear, madcap thing, Georgie Paget,' had to say about the croquet-parties and curates of Leatherhead. The ruse was a simple one, and would doubtless have failed of its effects upon a hackneyed man of the world, always watchful of feminine wiles, but it answered well enough with unsuspecting Mr Darcy ; and when, after a decent delay, Aurelia left him to his correspondence, he was quiescent and undoubting as ever. In the Blue Room she opened the letter. Another woman might have torn it open, eager and quivering with impatience, but not she. She drew it forth from the envelope as leisurely as if it had been a milliner's bill, or a dear friend's written raptures about her bridegroom's whiskers, her new home, or the like, and spread it out and read it at a glance.

'Escaped !' that was all she said ; 'Escaped !' and as she said it, she pressed her hand to her forehead, and was silent for a long time, thinking earnestly, with her eyes bent on the ground. Half an hour, three quarters of an hour, may have passed by without her stirring. At last she raised her proud head, and walked to the window with a strange smile on her lips. 'What was that message of the French king to false John, Richard Cœur de Lion's brother ?' she murmured, in a whisper like the hiss of an angry serpent ; ' "Take heed to yourself, for the devil is unchained !" Was not that how

the words ran ? Strange, how the world goes round, and sin and sorrow repeat themselves !'

There was nothing but sorrow in her face as she gazed out idly on the park, with its falling leaves and fern embrowned to autumn hues, and deer that were beginning to munch hay beneath the palings instead of cropping grass upon the uplands. Nothing but sorrow, yet no such sorrow as we associate with girlhood. It was the darkling melancholy of a strong nature at war with the world and the world's law ; and in her stubborn self-will and gloomy impenitence might be traced some resemblance to the lost archangel. But the mood changed, or was dismissed as unseasonable. Women like Aurelia Darcy are not mastered by their thoughts and feelings. They rise superior to the impulses that enslave the weak. Aurelia did so, and went through her usual routine—the music, the stroll in the garden, the novel-reading, the chat with her father, the few words spoken to her maid, exactly as usual. No one could have guessed the weight of the sullen secret that she carried about with her, smiling.

Late in the afternoon Miss Crawse was announced. Mr Darcy was out, busy with the inspection of a new chaff-cutter from London, and Aurelia received her visitor in the pink drawing-room, in the midst of all the carved alabaster, and pretty cameos, and Dresden china, and malachite tables, that poor dead Lady Maud had collected. Miss Crawse was flushed and breathless, eager to speak ; but there was something in Aurelia's face that checked her warmth, some revelation in the classic hardness of the beautiful mouth, firmer than ever now, if the inscrutable gray eyes told nothing.

'Miss Darcy, I came to tell you bad news. I see you know it. In your place, I should not take it so coolly,' said Miss Crawse.

'You, too, have heard from Ireland, then ?' said Aurelia in her softest tones, and her smile beamed forth like summer warmth, and her manner was as devoid of fear as it was of excitement. Miss Crawse's answer was prompt.

'Ireland ? Certainly not. But he is near us—near you ; and I should not be over-comfortable in your place, I can tell you. What's to be done, I don't know ; but we are both in the same boat, you and I, and must sink or swim together.'

Aurelia uttered no sound, but she bent her head assentingly, and her firm red lips silently seemed to repeat the words her friend had used—' sink or swim together.'

Then Miss Crawse, with rapid earnestness, told all—her visit to Miss Flinn, her walk to the turnpike on the Blanchminster road, and of the face she had seen, unobserved herself, through the open lattice. Any observer who had watched those two women would have deemed that the narrator of the tale was the one principally concerned—the one whom danger menaced. For Miss Crawse's eyes were bloodshot, and her breath came gaspingly, and her dusky countenance was of all colours—orange and sallow white, and unhealthy crimson. But Aurelia's cold beauty was unchanged ; and the only sign of excitement which she manifested was that her small, white, shapely hand—a hand that matched her face in its combination of delicacy with strength—opened and shut, as she listened, and with the force and action of one who squeezes out a hated life by sheer force of pressure. She listened, and never once interrupted her friend by

comment or question till Miss Crawse stopped, panting.

"Now, dear, I cannot ask you to help me, as you once did," said Aurelia in her low musical tones; "indeed, how much better that you should be able to say, truthfully, that you knew nothing about my affairs. Still, you can throw some light on the matter. This old woman, this Nanny Brown, bears you say, an indifferent character?"

"Only as a witch," said Miss Crawse bluntly. "Her son—Nicholas was his name—has just come out of jail, and her other children were transported, but that's all I know against her."

"Nicholas Brown!" said Aurelia, after a long thoughtful pause. "Yes, he was one of the men who were tried for the death of Sir Joseph's keeper; I remember now. Only give me time to think. A little time, and the obstacle shall be removed. There is no cause, Lydia, for real uneasiness to you or me."

Miss Crawse looked up at the ominous firmness of Aurelia's clear-cut lips, and her own face was livid, and her own voice trembled, as she hoarsely whispered: "Not murder? No, no, not that; Aurelia Darcy, say that is not in your thoughts!"

Aurelia actually laughed. Her cool, strong hand rested heavily on the wrist of her former friend. She could feel the pulse beating quick and hard.

"You silly Lydia!" said Miss Darcy, patting Miss Crawse's gloved hand with her firm fingers; "what romantic ideas you have. Murder would be worse than a crime: it would be a folly."

CHAPTER VII.—MISS DARCY GETS UP EARLY.

The youngest of the under-housemaids at Beechborough, creeping reluctantly down in the cold morning-light to unfasten shutters, open windows, and sweep carpets, before her seniors should appear with Turk's-head brushes to put the last artistic touches to the work, gaped and stared in stupid astonishment as Aurelia Darcy, in a gray cloak and linen gown, came swiftly down the great staircase and left the house by the garden door. The under-gardeners, just pulling off their jackets before commencing their task of rolling gravel, mowing grass, and clearing away dead leaves, made their awkward salutation of hat-touching, and gazed after Miss Darcy as her tall form vanished into distance. And the assistant-gamekeeper, who had risen before the sun to make a short professional tour of certain runs and gaps, where it was shrewdly surmised that wires were set, rubbed his eyes as he watched his master's daughter take the path across the meadows that skirted the park.

For Aurelia was not an early riser in general; she was not one of those whom flowers, sweet scented in their morning freshness, and the song of birds and hum of bees, and the indescribable renewal of the world's youth and brilliance, can lure forth from their beds. And on this hazy autumnal morning there was only the promise, not the accomplished fact, of a fine day. The pearls of dew lay thick and heavy on the grass, and the black earth of the paths was moist and slippery, while the hedges were dank and wet. The mist floated breast-high over the meadows, like a silvery fleece, and clung to the red-brown skirts of the tawny wood, and rolled like smoke-wreaths over the upland slopes, and hung like a curtain of pale orange and gray between the struggling sun and the awakening earth. Aurelia was not

given to early rising, not fond of walking; but now she was so early that ever and anon she met some labourer trudging to his work, and now she crossed the fields with a steady speed that Miss Crawse, stout little pedestrian as she was, would have found it hard to equal.

From Beechborough Hall to Crowther turnpike, by the road, even supposing that way to be curtailed by a short-cut through the green lanes, the distance is over four miles; but across the country the distance is not above three miles, and Aurelia knew the way well, as she always knew a track that she had once traversed. Bound on the errand, the purport of which was linked with her secret, Aurelia had no choice but to go on foot and alone. To order out a carriage, to bid the grooms saddle her horse, would have been fatal to her purpose, for if she rode or drove she could not go unattended. And there are cases in which servants are spies. This was one of them. So Aurelia Darcy pressed on to her goal, as heedless of the song of the lark, trilling out music overhead, as of the heavy dew that wetted her feet as the path failed, and merely a faint track remained to guide her across the grass-fields from stile to stile.

Aurelia neither heard nor saw any sight or sound, the perception of which was unnecessary for the object she had in view. But her thoughts were busy; and not the less so because in her powerful mind they were marshalled in logical sequence, and did not crowd tumultuously forward, clamouring for an audience, as is the case with many of us. To this woman, cradled in luxury, ever prosperous, and not yet twenty-one, but whose will was as strong as if it had been tempered in the black waters of adversity, life was a game. A game partly of chance, partly of skill. The best player, to whom bad cards had been dealt by fortune, might lose the game, that Aurelia's philosophy admitted; but scarcely any advantages could profit a bungler, of that she was quite sure. And her belief was that she had herself, with such cards as had fallen to her lot, played her game well and skilfully—of late years, at least. For she, too, had been impulsive once, and had made a mistake. A great, grievous mistake. An error of judgment that it would require the keenest skill, and courage, and firmness, to repair. But that might be done. With moderate good-luck, it must be done, so Aurelia thought.

Miss Darcy would have been angry, and would have believed that it was her right to be angry, with any one who should have set her down as a heathen. She went to church. She treated religious matters and religious persons with respect. She said her prayers with exemplary regularity, in public and in private, and if she did little to make the world better or holier, at least no act or word of hers, to all appearance, tended to make it worse. But she was a practical pagan. She really did believe that the race was to the swift and the battle to the strong, unless some untoward accident or some fatal fault should intervene. But, given certain worldly gifts, given also a moderate share of good-fortune, and Aurelia felt nearly as certain that success must follow as a mathematician of the result of his carefully-reasoned problem. Yes, the world with its rich prizes, was for the wise and the adroit; and if the plotter saw the ruin of his hopes, why it was only that the qualities were lacking, or that chance was adverse. Yes, Chance. As for the idea that a Divine Power really did shape and mould our rough-hewn acts, adapting the crude products of our

blindness and our selfishness to the great harmonious whole, Aurelia drove that idea from her; and, like all clever schemers, she erred in so doing.

There was a little boy beginning betimes to earn his fourpence by scaring crows, in a field near Crowther turnpike. This little fellow, bribed by a sixpence, clattered joyfully off to do Aurelia's bidding, and called Mrs Brown of the turnpike, whom he knew well, to speak with a lady. Mrs Brown came. A little white-haired woman, with bright eyes and a quaint face, seamed by a thousand wrinkles. A very nice-looking, tidy old person, and as such sure to earn the approval of churchwarden, Board, and clergyman. Respectability peeped forth from her well-starred widow's cap, her clean collar, her dark gown of some dead woollen stuff, and her snow-white apron. Many of those who keep turnpikes are repulsive-looking persons, ill-dressed and not conciliatory of manner—Mrs Brown was smooth of speech and neat of raiment. She said 'Thank you' civilly enough for every carter's fourpence, and never kept travellers waiting even in the worst of weather. Her accounts were well kept. The trustees of the Blanchminster turnpike-trust had no better servant. If the gossips of Patcham chose to set down old Nanny for a witch, at least she was in the good graces of squire and parson.

She came quickly. The little crow-boy had made his report, and, besides, a glance shewed her that Aurelia was a lady. She came courtesying up to where Mr Darcy's heiress stood beside the stile, smoothing out her apron as she drew near, and smiling obsequiously as she asked what the young lady might be pleased to want. Nanny Brown had had many a visit from persons of Aurelia's standing in the world. Some of these were silly girls, who wanted cosmetics to beautify their complexions, and who had been attracted by Mrs Brown's talent for compounding washes and unguents. Some, sillier still, wanted their fortunes told, on the strength of Nanny's evil fame; but the turnpike-keeper was too shrewd to forfeit her patrons' good-will for a pitiful half-crown, and the seekers after forbidden lore were sent empty away. Others came not to ask, but to give—to give tracts, kind words, counsel, and religious instruction; and Mrs Brown thankfully took their little pamphlets and their advice, and the little presents that accompanied them. Probably at first she considered that Miss Darcy had come on one of the errands above mentioned.

'Look at me,' said Aurelia, in her rich ringing voice. Humble Mrs Brown looked up; she had not ventured to take that liberty as yet, and as she looked, it was strange to see how the artificial smile faded and died out from Mrs Brown's face. Her twinkling eyes, undimmed by age, had met the steady gray eyes of Aurelia, and she felt herself in presence of a powerful nature. Only a word or two had been spoken, but Mrs Brown knew that the lady in the linen gown and gray cloak had not come to offer tracts, or to buy cosmetics, or to sue for a peep into futurity. Mrs Brown, thus invited, stared long and earnestly at her visitor, and the lines of her own hard vulpine mouth and high cheek-bones came out harder and sharper as the false smile died away.

'I am Miss Darcy of Beechborough. I have heard of you. I believe that you can do me a service. Will you walk with me a little way up the path here?' said Aurelia; and Mrs Brown

silently complied, walking mincingly beside the tall figure of the stranger, and stealing many a wary glance upward at the fair audacious face, that seemed no more to shrink from scrutiny than does the face of a statue. The very frankness of Aurelia's mention of her name was puzzling to Mrs Brown. She had had customers before who came from market-towns miles off, and who did their best to enwrap themselves and their shallow secrets in mystery. The freckled purchasers of her washes were not fond of telling their names. The young ladies who desired, per proxy, to read the stars, were very ambiguous on the earthly subject of their addresses. But Aurelia, daughter and only child of the rich Mr Darcy, and an earl's grandchild—old Nanny knew that too—was perfectly outspoken. Whatever she wanted—and Nanny suspected that the possessor of those gray fearless eyes, and that broad forehead and firm mouth, was not likely to have taken so much trouble without a motive—whatever she wanted, she made no attempt at disguise.

On her side, Aurelia knew what she was about. Her frankness about her name and abode, like all that she did, was calculated. She was well aware that she must be recognised, on slight inquiry, within miles of her father's house. And she read Mrs Brown like a book, and a very easy book too. Here was a hard, hypocritical, malignant nature, miserly very likely, as the thin bloodless lips hinted, but certainly one that hankered after gains that could be earned without the sacrifice of a fair outward show. With such a nature, Aurelia could deal as easily as a chemist with the acids and alkalies that he has been manipulating through years of toil.

The conversation was long, but the parts were very unequal. Aurelia's rich low voice rolled on like a river, sweeping away opposition, not by violence, but by a steady energy that brooked no hindrance. It was evident, by the varied inflections of tone, that Miss Darcy was suggesting difficulties, but only to crush and quell them; that she was putting the matter in question under different lights, but only to shew more markedly the accuracy of her own fixed idea. The shriller voice of Mrs Brown broke in at times, sometimes in questioning accents, more often in fawning assent.

'A hundred pounds. Ten to-day; the rest within six weeks,' said Aurelia, drawing several gold pieces from her purse, and letting them jingle as she poured them in a yellow stream into the gloved palm of her left hand, but careful not to look aside at the covetous glitter that she well knew must be in Mrs Brown's green eyes. 'A hundred pounds, not to be earned, remember, by doing anything wrong or sinful, but by a good action—a good action.'

'I should like to serve you, miss,' said the old woman, and her thin voice quivered with eagerness, and the sinews in her meagre throat stood out like knotted cordage as she spoke.

'Then fetch your son. I should like to explain it to him, as we shall want his help,' said Aurelia, with no triumph and no embarrassment in her tone.

Mrs Brown hesitated. Her son, she said, her poor misled Nicholas had friends who led him into follies, and who, on the preceding night, had led him into the folly of bestial drunkenness, or, as old Nanny euphuistically phrased it, of having

'a drop.' He was still sleeping off that drop, and might be out of temper if disturbed.

'You know, perhaps, Miss,' said his mother doubtfully, 'mayhaps you know that prisons, and bad company, and trouble, have made my son Nicholas rather rough-spoken and short in his manners. Perhaps you might be frightened.'

'Do I look as if I could be frightened?' said Aurelia quietly; 'call him, for I must go home, and I shall only have time to say a word or two.'

Mrs Brown went, but either she was very cautious in her choice of a mode of arousing the interesting sleeper, or she preferred to explain how matters stood before bringing him to the stile leading into the stubble-field where Aurelia waited, for Miss Darcy looked twice at her watch before old Nanny reappeared with a shambling, evilentreated fellow of middle age, with cropped hair, and a bloated, ugly face—the face of a sly ruffian who has escaped the gallows too narrowly to feel his bull-neck as yet quite safe from the hangman's clammy touch.

He shuffled up the path, leering impudently, but was abashed, in spite of himself, by Miss Darcy's dignified carriage and utter dauntlessness of bearing; the grimy forefinger went up to the brim of the battered hat, and the bloodshot eyes looked down, in unwilling deference. Him, too, Aurelia read like a book. Perhaps, nay probably, the daughter of George Darcy and Lady Maud Darcy had never spoken to a felon, nor looked into a felon's wicked eyes before, but she was not in the least at a loss. Old Nanny could not help admiring in her sleeve the tact with which Aurelia talked over this savage, not always to be managed even by his clever old mother, who had more wit in one of her skinny fingers than Nicholas in his ungainly body.

'For the matter o' that, ma'am; I'd have a poor opinion of myself if I was to be afraid of a slim London-looking whipper-snapper, like our lodger. But I can get two or three old mates, true-blue kivies that I can trust to, to bear a hand. We'll!—'

'You will do what has to be done, very well and thoroughly, I am sure,' it was thus that Aurelia interrupted her agent; 'and at the same time you will be too sensible to do more; violence is quite unnecessary, and no force need be used beyond that necessary for purposes of restraint. You understand?'

The graduate of Warwick jail nodded assent; 'We'll do it, mum, as we had ought,' said he, thoughtfully plucking bits of hawthorn from the hedge, and crushing them to pulp between his tobacco blackened front-teeth, while he kept his eyes on the ground; 'Jem, and the weaver, and I, can manage to do the trick and never let out a word about it, over our drink or what not! We're old pals, and shan't split on one another for all the chaplains and beaks in England. But there's one thing. Mother says the chap's got firearms.'

'Firearms!' repeated Aurelia, almost thrown off her guard, for she was really no braver, where physical danger was concerned, than the average of her sex. What gave her the semblance of courage was her mental daring, and the polished adamantine strength of an intellect that cast aside imaginary terrors. But of death, of an early, and especially a violent death, she entertained as true

a dread and as profound a loathing as ever did any of the children of this world. The mention of deadly weapons, near at hand, and in the possession of one who had little cause, as she well knew, to deal mercifully with her, caused the chill that crept, like the coils of a frozen snake, around her heart. But such was her self-command, that to her very exclamation of alarm she contrived to give a tone of scornful incredulity, and to follow it by a little laugh of what seemed genuine contempt.

Mrs Brown, narrowly eyeing her fair young client, did not see so much as the twitching of a muscle or the slightest change of colour; and the sheepstealer looked up, with something of boorish admiration in his dull eyes.

'I likes pluck in my pals—no offence, mum. 'Tis a pleasure to work for such a lady as you, and I'd do the job if he'd got fifty pistols.' And the fellow added an oath, meant to reassure his employer as to his determination, the ugly sound of which almost betrayed Aurelia into a shudder of dismay. She had narrowly avoided shewing some sign of disgust and anger when the blood-stained jailbird before her spoke of her as an accomplice. Was it indeed come to this? She, the accomplice of such as these! No, they were her tools, and when done with, could be laid aside.

Few more words were spoken, but she counted out the ten clinking golden coins into the wrinkled palm of old Nanny, and she agreed with the old woman upon a token by which the tidings of success should be forwarded to her.

'Remember, I dropped this handkerchief in a visit to your cottage,' she said, handing the delicate scrap of embroidered cambric to the turnpike keeper; 'You send it me back, when all is comfortably managed; but mention no place, and no name in your message, except mine.'

When Aurelia reached her home it was still early, and the Squire was not down yet, as her maid informed her. The horror of Jennings at the wet boots and draggled skirt—the boots were soaked by the dew as if they had been lying in a river, and the soft leather was torn away piecemeal in the effort to take them off—was only equalled by her curiosity as to the cause of her young lady's matutinal expedition. But her curiosity was baffled. Aurelia was not the girl to make her waiting-woman the repository of her secrets, and thus to reverse their relative positions. She merely said, with imperturbable good-humour, that she did not think early hours and morning walks worth the trouble they occasioned, and that she should scarcely try the experiment again. Presently she was seated at the breakfast-table, neat and calm in attire and deportment, pouring out her father's tea as demurely as if Nanny Brown and grim Nicholas had been but denizens of a dream-world.

It was not until the following morning that a servant brought in, on a salver, a little embroidered handkerchief worked with Aurelia's cipher.

'A boy brought this, Miss, if you please. Said you left it behind by mistake, Miss, in his grandmother's cottage, yesterday.'

Aurelia picked up the handkerchief, and looked at the letters in the corner of it.

'To be sure,' she said; 'I thought I had dropped it, walking. Give the boy something for his trouble, Jenkins.'

And the butler withdrew, unsuspecting, while his young mistress composedly finished directing

the letter she had just sealed, and which was addressed to Cornelius Kelly, Esq., M.D., Nine Stone Bridge, Ogletown, Ireland.

ENGLISH SPORTS FROM A FRENCH POINT OF VIEW.

THE last relics of what may be called international barbarism between England and France are quietly disappearing. But, though the reflection be somewhat commonplace—as contrasts between new times and old ones mostly are—even middle-aged men may marvel as they call to mind how recently our notion of French dietaries was embodied in frogs, and how short a time has elapsed since Smithfield and halters composed the Gallic notion of our laws of divorce. Our mutual infinitude of prejudice has been melting away rapidly, and might have disappeared even sooner, if English auxiliary verbs were not so perplexing, and French wash-hand basins were bigger. Consider the circulation *Les Misérables* had in England, in spite of the *argot* of the Paris sewers, that filled one mortal volume, and which no dictionary could elucidate! while still more lately M. Esquiro has been conversing pleasantly and intelligently in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* about English brewers, hop-pickers, banks, coinage, navvies, and a host of our other institutions, including one class of subjects which he must be a bold man to have ventured on—our sports.

Of cricket, hunting, racing, pedestrianism, and *la boxe*, M. Esquiro knows a good deal more than most Englishmen; and his criticisms on these matters, with which we have now to do, are worth a good deal; for he is by no means a lazy explorer, and possesses indubitably that 'transcendent capacity for taking trouble,' which is Mr Carlyle's definition of genius. A pertinacious ferreting man, evidently by no means shy of asking questions, is our author, and everywhere, from the Metropolitan Sewer in which M. Esquiro lunched with notabilities, to the New Forest, where he camped out with gypsies, he seems to have found people, high and low, ready and willing to supply his mental cravings. When he has obtained the information, he finds no difficulty in imparting it to his readers with a graphic pen. 'Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit,' though the word 'ornavit' might now and then be fairly construed 'embellished.' He is, perhaps, rather too transparent, here and there, in placing his own reflections, observations, and comments in the mouth of 'the young Englishman by my side,' or 'the old sportsman,' when there cannot be a shadow of doubt that they are neither any young Englishman's nor old sportsman's, but those of a certain M. Alphonse Esquiro, whose identity is very easily discoverable therein. Perhaps he is a little too fond, too, of *couleur de rose*—a fault into which few Frenchmen fall in the English atmosphere. Anyhow, the contrast between the opinion of M. Assolant, who stayed a few days in Leicester Square in International Exhibition-time, and for evermore vents against all things English the spleen which he imbibed with the air of that locality, and this of M. Esquiro, who has penetrated beneath the surface of our social life, is satisfactory to our national self-complacency.

Our author's first introduction to an English pack of hounds 'at home' was at the famous Berkeley

Kennels, where he found hunters cared for better than paupers, and as well almost as felons; hounds with their wants attended to like children; a huge establishment all maintained for the purpose of killing an animal, whom to kill in any other fashion is rank treason against the unwritten laws of sport by which the English squire is bound. 'What! a hundred such hunting establishments, more or less extensive than this, in England and Wales, costing on an average—and that at a very moderate estimate—L.1500 a year each, and therefore involving in the whole a direct expenditure of L.150,000 a year by masters of hounds alone! Surely this "nation of shopkeepers" is not exclusively occupied with its shops.'

M. Esquiro, of course, visited Melton-Mowbray, the head-quarters of the *élite* of the hunting-world. Here he ventured out a-hunting; and in spite of the dirty little English boys who characterise the French seat on horseback as 'scissors across a gate,' he seems to have seen a decent amount of sport, and to have a wholesome respect for dashing equestrianism, where a man 'had a chance of breaking his neck every moment.' A peculiarity of Panurge's sheep, as described by Rabelais, was, that when the leader of the flock had jumped over a bar, all the rest in succession jumped too, though the bar had been removed after the first one passed; and M. Esquiro's horse seems to have possessed a similar knack of unnecessary jumping, such as to seriously disconcert its rider, who confesses to the efforts which it cost to keep his saddle 'on such ground and while going at such a headlong pace.' Inspired, however, by the example of a 'fat farmer, who, spite of his weight, appeared to fear nothing, bounding on his saddle in a fearful manner at each leap his horse attempted, and then, like a mountain upheaved by an earthquake, invariably falling on his base,' our author kept up with the chase sufficiently close to be able to note its principal details. To M. Esquiro belongs the credit of discovering how the famous Balaklava charge ought to be characterised. 'C'était magnifique, mais ce n'était pas la guerre.' What was it then? M. Esquiro answers: 'A charge of fox-hunters, led by the famous fox-hunter, Lord Cardigan; and from this,' he says, 'an idea may be formed of what a regiment of fox-hunters would be, and doubtless one would be formed in every county in England, if invaders should need to be repelled.'

About cricket, M. Esquiro does not profess to know very much; as he says, 'this game marks the limit of practical naturalisation.' But he is willing to appreciate its value, notwithstanding, and believes in Mr Kingsley's muscular Christianity school, and in our efforts to 'defy, by moral energy and violent bodily exercises, the deleterious influences of a damp sky.'

The first game which M. Esquiro saw in England was one which bears about the same relation to an ordinary cricket-match as a charlatan does to a physician. Every year at spring-tides in the summer, the good people of Deal take a great deal of trouble to go out to the Goodwin Sands to play there what is euphemistically called a cricket-match; of which, as the sand is conspicuously unfit to be played on at all, the chief charm must be that the game is very soon brought to an abrupt conclusion by the returning tide. For itinerant vendors of hardbake and nuts, the day is a great

one, but for cricketers it is a blank ; so that, what with sea-sickness, and the gingerbread stalls, and the novelty of the whole affair, it is not to be wondered at that M. Esquiroz imbibed rather hazy notions of the game. When we say that he describes the whole twenty-two players as being occupied in the game at the same time, and pitted against each other individually, it is evident that he is carrying out his theory as to the limit of naturalisation. As he returned, all amazement, some wicked wag inflicted a story on him which seems to reach the limit of human credulity. 'An English officer who, on a cricket-day, fell asleep on the sand, after copious libations, had been forgotten at the moment of departure. He was saved almost miraculously by a dismasted vessel, that at nightfall ran on to the bank, which was already invaded by the waves. The faint light burning on board this lost vessel fortunately attracted the attention of the Deal pilots.'

Not an essay only, but a whole book might well be filled with the history and anecdotes of one big field in St John's Wood. There, in 1815, was established that Marylebone Club which gives laws not to England alone, but to the cricket-world even at the antipodes. There, years ago, when betting on cricket-matches was as prevalent as betting on races now a days, and when professional players were bribed to lose as unscrupulously as horses are sometimes 'scratched' now, habitués of Lord's were to be seen, betting-book in hand, doing their utmost to bring cricket-morality on a level with that of the turf. Lord's was the scene of the story of the batsman who was interrupted in his innings by the (false) news that his wife had died suddenly, and who naïvely expressed a regret that she hadn't 'waited till his innings was over.' The present state of public opinion sets against wagers on cricket-matches; so much so, that the sporting papers were almost unanimous in decrying one or two of this description, which were proposed to take place between some of the most celebrated professionals last year.

One of the greatest charms in cricket is doubtless its comprehensiveness. All meet on a level in the cricket-field ; the butcher and the prince are there on equal terms. There is a certain huge establishment in one of the three kingdoms, the master of which is well known to be most enthusiastic on the score of cricket. His aides-de-camp, coachmen, footmen, nearly all the household, are cricketers ; and as his hospitality to the elevens which contest with the 'Vice-regal' Club is unbounded, it not unfrequently happens that the footman who has bowled you out in the day stands behind your chair in the evening. That footman must have a consciousness of having previously got the better of you, which does no harm to his self-respect. When the Earl of Carlisle (who in cricketers' estimation well deserves the title of 'Duke,' which M. Esquiroz bestows on him) first went as Viceroy, there was but one cricket-club, and that not very flourishing, in Ireland ; now, such is the effect of fashion, and readiness of the Irish character to seize hold of novelties, that scarcely a village in the Emerald Isle is without its band of eager cricketers.

The game is not without royal patrons. The father of George III., that 'poor Fred. who was alive and is dead,' was no mean proficient with the

bat, and his death even is said to have been the ultimate result of a blow from a cricket-ball. *Abeit omen*, for the present Prince of Wales is a cricketer, and one who knows how to defend his wicket to some purpose, though his Royal Highness will not condescend to practise enough to become a thorough batsman. He is the patron of the Marylebone Club, and was once presented with a cricket-ball by the proprietor of the ground, which, as the reporters said, his Royal Highness was graciously pleased to accept, though what on earth his Royal Highness did with it, is not within the knowledge of the present writer. M. Esquiroz dilates much on the advantages of cricket, as being a connecting-link between the different classes of society. All players, as he observes, are equal behind the bat, and in county-matches, not those in the best social position, but those who are the best players, are selected for the highest honour to which cricketers can aspire—that of representing their county on the 'tent'd field.'

The professionals—that is, those who make cricket their trade, and gain a living by it—are not lost sight of by M. Esquiroz ; but he seems to be unaware of the great additions to that class which have been made of late years. There is now scarcely a town cricket-club of any importance that has not its professional bowler or bowlers, and almost every large school, as a matter of course, secures the services of some such cricket 'coach' to train the boys in the science of the 'noble game.' Eton usually maintains two, or even three professionals ; Marlborough, two ; Harrow, two ; Westminster, one ; Winchester, two ; and so on. Generally, professionals are an amiable set enough, but occasionally party jealousy causes great disturbance among them. In the cricket season of 1859, the great 'All England' bowler, Jackson, and the great 'United All England' batsman, Carpenter, were engaged at the same time as professionals at Marlborough College ; and as the animus between the two elevens was at that time very strong, it was no little treat to see the two 'cracks' pitted against each other in the school-matches, in which one professional played on each side. Many a Marlborough boy will recollect the time when Carpenter completely mastered Jackson's bowling, and when Jackson, in retaliation, bowled not at the wickets, but at Carpenter.

The All England was for a long time without a rival as a club composed exclusively of first-rate professionals ; but the United All England has lately risen to a rank at least equal to that of the older institution. These elevens traverse the country during the whole of the summer, playing all the local clubs who desire to pit their eleven, eighteen, or twenty-two against the eleven professionals, and are willing to pay for the honour. The latter receive, we believe, six guineas apiece if they win, and five if they lose ; and as in cricket quantity generally succumbs to quality, they generally acquire a right to the larger amount. But of late years their peregrinations have not been confined to England, and the Australians have twice given an English eleven a succession of cricket seasons by engaging it (on the most liberal terms) to spend the winter months in matches against the colonial clubs, returning in time for the English summer. M. Esquiroz gives a graphic description of the first of these visits, which was paid in 1861, into which we fear that want of

space will not allow us to follow him. But when we say that the money paid by spectators (of whom 17,000 were present) for admission to the first match at Melbourne amounted to more than five thousand pounds, some idea may be formed of the interest which the game excites in the colonial breast.

We cannot take leave of M. Esquiro's book*—of which, however, the essays on sport only form a part—without expressing our sense of the great charm which pervades it in its apparent want of effort. We have quoted Mr Carlyle's definition of genius as being 'a transcendent capacity for taking trouble'; but there is another definition, by the genial author of *Friends in Council*, which appears to be equally applicable to him. 'Genius consists,' says Mr Helps, 'in an infinite capacity for taking interest'; and we believe that to say that M. Esquiro's everywhere gives to his readers the conviction that he possesses this capacity in no small degree, is to pay the very highest compliment to a foreigner who enters into the details of English social life.

THE GREAT ST BERNARD AND THE GREATER.

ALL Londoners remember with awe that hero of the Diddlesex Dogshow who was said to be the largest dog in the world. He bore, however, the comparative name of *Towser*, as though in expectation that a superior animal would one day or another diminish him in the public eye; and that apprehension has been realised. My dog, formerly Mithridates, but since his High Mightiness has been established, *Towseat*, is a considerably larger dog in every way: in fact, he is bigger than most donkeys. His superiority would not have been acknowledged, if acknowledgment could have been avoided; but I made a point of taking the very next villa but two to the one inhabited by the proprietor of *Towser*, so that persons who came to see that overrated animal should have a good chance of beholding the true king of the canine world. I suffered him to run about in the road before my rival's very gate, for there is not a more good-natured and harmless creature in all Christendom than Mithridates; while as for his being stolen—I should like to see the man or men who would venture upon that felonious enterprise.

Towser, on the contrary, although big enough to know better, and to be able to afford to be magnanimous, is the vilest-tempered of curs; his own master, as it is whispered, dares not approach within reach of his chain; and when he walks abroad, he is muzzled. Otherwise, he does not make two bites of a poodle, and was even suspected of having bolted the grocer's boy, for upwards of a fortnight, until intelligence was received that the lad had bolted of his own accord elsewhere. The postman dares not approach the house, but throws the letter-bag over the wall; and the female servants complain that there are no followers in all Bayswater bold enough to visit them, since the policeman so nearly met his doom from *Towser* when courting the cook. That dog had a constable's staff, a belt, a bull's-eye lantern, and five and a half yards of broadcloth, for supper

one night, and they do say, a considerable slice of X242 besides. He will eat anything; and his roars when impatient for food are heard in the six villa residences on either side of him. Remonstrances and threats of appeal to the police are silenced, I understand, by the brutal menace, that he will be unchained, and suffered to roam at large; a measure equivalent to decimation of the juvenile inhabitants. But enough of this unpleasant subject for the present.

Let me return to *Towseat*, or, as we still denominate him, unless when the question of comparison is mooted, Mithridates; he is also called Mit for shortness, and from the affection with which the members of my family regard him. He is a truly lovable animal, and as gentle as any Alderney cow of the same size. Only he will eat cats. I mention this unfortunate peculiarity at once and without reserve. The owner of *Towser* will, I know, exult in the admission: but *my* dog never had the rattle in his throat from robbing a member of the police force of his arms and necessaries, nor tried to make a dead-letter of the postman. Yes; Mithridates, who permits half the children in Acacia Terrace to ride upon his back at once, and who passes all dogs under three feet high (above which altitude he ominously growls at them) with supreme indifference—this magnanimous animal eats cats. I hope, however, I have not conveyed any disagreeable idea of cranching or mastication, for nothing of the sort occurs; nor does his High Mightiness ever pursue a cat, an attempt which would be as vain as it would be undignified and indecorous. His pleasure is to lie after dinner in the sun just outside his kennel (which is only a size or two smaller than the villa), and pretend to be asleep. Then over the walls and gates, attracted by the bones and other relics of his stupendous meal, come the neighbouring cats, stealthily, silently, bent upon pillage, and unsuspicuous of any ruse upon the part of one of a race whose intelligence they are perhaps accustomed to underrate. There he lies, prostrate, vast, his mighty limbs to all appearance loosened and enervate. His lustrous eyes are closed, his cavernous jaws rest on his stretched-out paws. A sculptor might mould from him for an embodiment of *Strength in Slumber*, but would much deceive the world who beheld his statue. He might much more fitly name it *The Weasel Asleep*. On this side and on that, the soft-footed intruders approach the gigantic animal, until one luckless grimalkin comes within reach of his spring; then in an instant the mighty mass is galvanised into life; Mithridates snaps at her with a noise like the crack of a whip, and that is poor pussy's knell. No student of anatomy could have selected a more vital part; she is dead. The art of deglution attributed to the boa-constrictor then takes place; Mithridates swallows her quietly like a large jujube, without using his teeth; after which he lies down and goes to sleep again. His slumber, however, is no longer feigned. Cats may come and cats may go, but they will never move him more until the morrow. Enough is as good as a feast, is his temperate motto.

Yet even at the rate of one *per diem*, the feline mortality excites much angry remonstrance among the neighbours. A very respectable lady in the next villa, having lost seven favourite animals in this way—not even the skin being left to stuff a cushion in memory of the departed—laid her

* *The English at Home*. By Alphonse Esquiro. Third Series.

complaint before a magistrate. Mithridates was produced outside of the court, because the court would not hold him ; and the charge was gone into in all its interesting details. A barrister of eminence was retained for the defence. The result was a triumphal acquittal of the noble animal. The cats were trespassers and thieves ; he had not got over *their* walls, or attempted to forage in their private premises. Nevertheless, rather than that any ill-feeling should be generated against this magnanimous creature, I presented a Persian cat to the prosecutrix, as well as to every other person who had suffered a similar loss.* I have never regretted this generosity ; but a time came when I congratulated myself upon having thus acted—when Mithridates repaid me for all my solicitude for his good name, by preserving me from death.

It is my custom, in the summer, to take long walks into the country, from which I sometimes do not return until very late. Upon an occasion of this kind, I had arrived at the corner of Acacia Terrace about midnight, and suffered my dog to bound away in advance of me, being so near his home. It was in the palmy time of the garroters, before Mr Baron Bramwell blighted their cheerful prospects, and I never went out at night without Mithridates and a life-preserver. I had to pass by the villa-residence of Towser to reach my own, and as I did so, who should rush forth from it, with furious eyes and broken chain fleeing behind him, but that awful beast himself ! With one fierce growl of passion, he came upon me with the suddenness of a white squall, yet not so swiftly but that I had my life-preserver ready for him, and dealt him such a blow that he fell down with a sort of quiver at my very feet. I had struck his skull so violently that the lead ran out of my life-preserver ; and while I was thinking how horrible would be my position, in case he managed to recover himself a little, he did it. His eyes and jaws seemed to open simultaneously ; he staggered to his feet, and made at me once again with powers that were evidently being renovated with every instant. I stepped backwards, waving with one hand my comparatively useless weapon, and with the other feeling for my dog-whistle, which was suspended to my watch-chain. In my terror and confusion, I could not find it ; but my ear, straining for the sound, caught the long, dull gallop of Mithridates, like a charge of the Household Brigade, coming back again to see what detained his master. Towser caught it also, and turned from me, as a knight of old might have turned from a mere villein on foot to a more worthy antagonist, clad from head to heel in Milan armour. His every hair bristled with fury at the sight of his hated rival. He ran to meet him with a sort of fiendish ardour, that did not, however, express itself in the slightest sound. Two sharks in the tropic seas could not have rushed to battle with more silent swiftness. In an instant their dreadful jaws closed, sandwich-like, upon one another, and the blood streamed forth from both like the upper system of the Crystal Palace Fountains. Mithridates had got Towser's nose and upper jaw in his safe-keeping ; Towser had secured the lower jaw of his enemy in his. While

I watched this truly epic and really frightful struggle, this Homeric teeth-battle, the owner of Towser, accompanied by a friend and a footman, came out into the road ; likewise, after a period sufficient for the murder and concealment of the body of any one of us, two friends of order—police-men. The three former attached themselves to the tail of Towser ; the two latter and myself annexed ourselves to that of Mithridates. I thought the skin must have peeled off both of them, but it did not do so in either case. As for *our* dog, we might just as well have been pulling at a pump-handle. We then got ropes, and tried to choke the creatures off one another. This plan proved equally ineffectual. At last, one of the peace-officers ejaculated : 'Lor, what a fool I've been, not to have thought of a pinch of snuff !' With these words, he produced a box from his breast-pocket, and administered a pinch of 'blackguard' to both combatants. The separating effect was instantaneous, and the ropes prevented them from renewing their strife. We dragged them away from one another, black in the face, and growling unutterable things.

I know now why ruffians assemble together in such crowds to see the case of *Heenan v. King* settled extrajudicially ; but I am certain that there has never been such a dog-fight before or since, as that which I had the privilege to witness.

N I G H T.

Who calls me dark ? For do I not display
Wonders that else man's eye would never see ?
Waste in the blank and blinding glare of day,
The skies bud forth their glories but to me.

Is it not mine to pile heaven's crystal cup—
Drained by the thirsty sun, and void by day—
Brimful of living gems, profuse, heaped up,
The bounteous largesse of my royal way ?

Mine to call o'er at dusk the roll of heaven—
Marshal its glittering files in order due ;
To beckon forth the lurking star of even,
And bid the constellations start to view ?

The wandering planets to their paths recall,
And summon to the master truant spheres,
Till, flocking to my standard one and all,
They throng the zenith in unfathomed tiers.

Is not a crown of lightnings mine to wear,
When polar flames suffuse my skies with splendour ?
Mine, too, the homage with the sun to share
His vagrant vassals rush through space to render ?

Do I not lure stray sunbeams from the day,
To hurl them broadcast as winged meteors forth ;
Strew sheafs of fiery arrows on my way,
And blazon my dark spaces in the North ?

Who calls me dark ? For are not hidden things
Revealed by me to Science, whose keen eye
Looks forth beneath the shadow of my wings,
To fathom Space, and scan Infinity ?

Do I not bid her learn how heaven yet teems
With germs slow ripening from Creation's morn,
And see where filmy Chaos vaguely gleams,
The spawn of suns and systems yet unborn ?

* Persian cats never leave the house, and have therefore considerably more than the usual feline complement of nine lives.